

Virtual High School Advisory Council
August 3, 2006

1) Review agenda

2) Funding

Dr. Melmer brought up options for funding online courses. The discussion was whether the state should be looking to fund virtual classes as they do the E-learning center or should this be a free enterprise system.

Erica Tallman – defended the E-learning system as its focus is very narrow in serving sparse districts.

Ann Smith – for SF, allowing students to take classes online does not reduce costs for the district as they still need to hire the same number of teachers and thus this is an additional cost factor.

Rep Olson – should we regulate the number of students that may take online courses – if there are 20 students, should they be required to hire a teacher? There needs to be something to avoid abuse.

Erica – there is unpredictability in the numbers of enrollment.

Rick Bates – RC pays teachers \$1200/course and stipend for completers.

Dan – Two values of distant education: 1) supplement courses for districts that can't offer different classes, and 2) value in high school reform for open entry and open exit.

Downside to free enterprise approach:

1) depends on whether students are taking full loads or partial loads

Discussion on paying for students sitting in the school and being paid the \$4200 or paying for each credit earned.

Rick Bates – the state's focus should be to provide quality and consistent courses and it is the school's responsibility to determine whether or not they allow the student to take the coursework.

Consensus was that we should not regulate course costs, however, should we subsidize?

What does completion mean? Passing the exit exam at a certain proficiency level.

- We don't require accountability at this time for course proficiency.
- High schools are not encouraged to encourage students to take more credits.

There needs to be an assumption of the % of students that may take virtual courses and there needs to be a value set on that. The formula would need to be readjusted over time.

- If the intent is to encourage more providers for distance education, we need to level the playing field.
- If the intent is to have high quality classes with a limited enrollment then we use the Northern model.

Options:

- 1) Free enterprise system
 - a. No state involvement other than quality control
 - b. ADM pays
- 2) State subsidy/district
 - a. ADM formula = \$\$ for district
- 3) State subsidy
 - a. Total \$\$ accessed by district
- 4) State controls system
 - a. State coordinates all courses and costs

Using the bucket option (x-number of dollars available for virtual schools) how do schools budget?

Rep Olson feels that legislators want to give more money to schools BUT want to know HOW the money will be used. Thinks this would be a good option and the formula might be more readily accepted.

- 2) Update on the progress of roll-out
 - a. Website update – information available to include provider approval form, meeting notes, agendas, etc.
 - b. Progress on storefront – should be ready by Sept.
 - c. State board meeting – rules should go to BOE for public hearing in Sept. and LRC Sept 28

It was determined that although the storefront will be created in advance, we will actually wait until second semester for the official roll-out. That will give us time to get providers approved, courses approved, and have it ready for the legislature at that time.

- 3) Course approval rubric
 - a. Courses should have a minimum standard with room for improvement or growth
 - b. There should not be any area that should have a zero
 - c. Needs to have something regarding how grades are assessed and a definition of what is an A, B, C, etc. (Grading policy)

d. See attached document

4) Discussion on timeline

- a. State aid study task force will meet Sept 5-6 and ideas will be brought to the group
- b. Outcome of support of the task force will be brought back to advisory council for recommendations for legislation
- c. Approval of providers and courses throughout fall
- d. Registration available for 2007-08 school year

5) End of course exams

- a. Strong need to get exams created for purpose of the Virtual HS and other entities (Hutterites) that are taking courses non-traditionally

Next meeting date: October 19